

THE ILL-FATED BEN SHERROD,
BY A SUFFERER.

On Sunday morning the 7th day of May, 1837, the steamboat Ben Sherrod, under the command of Capt. Castleman, was preparing to leave the levee at New Orleans. She was thronged with passengers. Many a beautiful and interesting woman that morning was busy in arranging the little things incident to travelling, and they all looked forward with high and certain hope to the end of their journey. Little innocent children played about the cabin, and would run to the guards now and then to wonder in infantine language, at the next boat, or the water, or something else that drew their attention—"Oh, look here, Henry—I don't like that boat Lexington." "I wish I was going by her," said Henry musingly.—The men too were urgent in their arrangements of the trunks, and getting on board sundry articles which a ten days passage rendered necessary. In fine, all seemed hope, joy, and certainty.

The cabin of the Ben Sherrod was on the upper deck, but narrow in proportion to her build, for she was what is technically called a Tennessee Cotton Boat.—To those who have never seen a cotton boat loaded, it is a wondrous sight. The bales are piled from the lower guards whenever there is a cranny until they reach above the second deck, room being merely left for passengers to walk outside the cabin. You have regular alleys left amid the cotton in order to pass about on the first deck. Such is a cotton boat carrying from 1500 to 2000 bales.

The Ben's finish and accommodation of the cabin was by no means such as would begin to compare with the regular passenger boats. It being late in the season, and but few large steamers being in port in consequence of the severity of the times, the Ben Sherrod got an undue number of passengers; otherwise she would have been avoided, for her accommodations were not enticing. She had a heavy freight on board, and several horses and carriages on the forecastle. The build of the Ben Sherrod was heavy—her timper being of the largest size.

The morning was clear and sultry—so much so that umbrellas were necessary to ward of the sun. It was a curious sight to see the hundreds of citizens hurrying on board to leave letters and to see them coming away. When a steamboat is going off on the Southern or Western waters, the excitement is fully equal to that attendant upon the departure of a Liverpool Packet. About 10 o'clock A. M. the ill-fated steamer pushed off upon the turbid current of the Mississippi as a swan upon the waters. In a few minutes she was under way tossing high in air bright and snowy clouds of steam at every revolution of her engine. Talk not of your northern steamboats!—A Mississippi steamboat of 700 tons burthen, with adequate machinery, is one of the sublimities of poetry. For thousand of miles that great body forces its way through a desolate country against an almost resistless current, and all the evidence you have of the immense power exerted, is brought home to your sense by the everlasting and majestic burst of exertion from her escapement pipe and the ceaseless stroke of her paddle wheels. In the dead of night when, amid the swamps on either side, your noble vessel winds her upward way—when not a soul is seen on board but the officer on deck—when naught is heard but the clang of the fire doors amid the hoarse coughing of the engineer—imagination yields to the vastness of the ideas thus excited in your mind, and if you have a soul that makes you a man, you cannot help feeling strongly alive to the mightiness of art in contest with the mightiness of nature. Such a scene, and hundreds such have been realized with an intensity that cannot be described, always made me a better man than before. I never could tire of the steamboat navigation of the Mississippi.

On Tuesday evening, of the 9th of May, 1837, the steamboat Prairie, on her way to St. Louis, bore hard upon the Ben Sherrod. It was necessary for the latter to stop at Fort Adams, during which the Prairie passed her. Great vexation was manifested by some of the passengers that the Prairie should get to Natchez first. This subject formed the theme of conversation for two or three hours, the Captain assuring them that he would beat her any how. The Prairie is a very fast boat, and under equal chances could have beaten the Sherrod.

So soon as the business was transacted at Fort Adams, for which she stopped, orders were given to the men to keep up the fires at the extent. It was now a little past 11 P. M. The Captain retired to his berth, with his clothes on, and left the deck in charge of an officer. During the evening a barrel of whiskey had been turned out, and permission given to the hands to do as they pleased. As may be expected they drew upon the barrel quite liberally. It is the custom on all boats to furnish the firemen with liquor, though a difference exists as to the mode. But it is due to the many worthy Captains now on the Mississippi to state that the practice of furnishing spirits is gradually dying away, and where they are given it is only done in moderation.

As the Sherrod passed on above Fort Adams towards the mouth of the Homochitta, the wood piled up in front of the furnaces several times caught fire, and was once or twice imperfectly extinguished by the drunken hands. It must be understood by those of my readers who have never seen a western steamboat, that the boilers are entirely above the first deck, and that when the fires are well kept up for any length of time, the heat is almost insupportable. Were it not for the draft occasioned by the speed of the boat, it would be very difficult to attend the fires. As the boat was booming along through the water close in the shore; for ascending the river, boats go as close as they can to avoid the current, a negro from the beach called out to the firemen that the wood was on fire. The reply was, "go to hell, and mind your own business," from some half intoxicated hand. "Oh, Massa," answered the negro, "if you don't take care, you be in hell before I will." On, on went the boat at a tremendous rate, quivering and trembling in all her length at every revolution of the wheels. The steam was created so fast, that it continued to escape thro' the safety valve, and by its sharp singing told a tale that every prudent captain would have understood. As the vessel rounded the bar that makes off from the Homochitta, being compelled to stand out into the middle of the river in consequence, the fire was discovered. It was about one o'clock in the morning. A passenger had got up previously, and was standing on the boiler deck, when to his astonishment the fire broke out from the pile of wood. A little presence of mind and a set of men intoxicated, could have saved the boat. The passenger seized a bucket and was about to plunge it overboard for water when he found it locked. An instant more and the fire increased in volume. The Captain was now awakened. He saw the fire had seized the deck. He ran aft and announced the ill tidings. No sooner were the words out of his mouth, than the shrieks of mothers, sisters, and babes, resounded through the hitherto silent cabin in the wildest confusion. Men were aroused from their dreaming cots to experience the hot air of approaching fire. The pilot being elevated on the hurricane deck, at the instant of perceiving the flames, put the head of the boat shoreward. She scarcely got under way in that direction, than the tiller ropes were burnt assunder. Two miles at least from the land, the vessel took a sheer, and, borne upon by the current, made several revolutions, until she struck across the river. A bar brought her up for the moment.

The flames had now extended fore and aft. At the first alarm several deck passengers had gotten into the yawl that hung suspended by the davids. A cabin passenger endowed with some degree of courage and presence of mind expostulated with them and did all he could to save the boat for the ladies. 'Twas useless.—One took out his knife and cut away the forward tackle. The next instant, and they were all, to the number of twenty or more, launched into the angry waters.—They were soon no more.

The boat being lowered from the other end filled and was useless. Now came the trying moment. Hundreds leaped from the burning wreck into the waters. Mothers were seen standing on their guards with their hair dishevelled, praying for help. Their dear little innocents clung to the sides of their mothers, and with their tiny hands beat away the burning flames. Sisters called out to their brothers in unearthly voices—save me, oh my brother—wives crying to husbands to save their children in total forgetfulness of themselves.—every second or two a desperate plunge of some poor victim falling on the appalled ear.—

Seven thousand and ten passengers have arrived at the New York quarantine, from Europe, within the last ten days.

the dashing to and fro of the horses on the forecastle, groaning audibly for pain of the devouring element—the continued puffing of the engine for it still continued to go.—the screaming mother, who had leaped overboard to the desperation of the moment with her only child,—the flames mounting to the sky with the rapidity of lightning,—shall I ever forget the scene—the hour of horror and alarm? Never, were I to live till memory shall forget all else that ever came to the senses. The short half hour that separated and plunged into eternity 200 human beings has been so burnt into the memory that even now I think of it more than half the day.

I was swimming to the shore with all my might, endeavoring to sustain a mother and a child. My strength failed me.

The babe was nothing—a mere cork—"Go, go," said the brave mother, "save my child; save my—" and she sunk to rise no more. Nerved by the resolution of that woman, I reached the shore in safety. The babe I saved. Ere I reached the beach, the Sherrod had swung off the bar, and was slowly floating down, the engine having ceased running. In every direction heads dotted the surface of the river. A new and still more awful appearance, the burning wreck now wore. Mothers were seen clinging, with the last hope, to the blazing timbers, and dropping off one by one. The screams had ceased. A sudden silence rested o'er the devoted vessel. The flames became tired of their destructive work.

While I sat dripping and overcome upon the beach, a steamboat, the Columbus, hove in sight and bore for the wreck. It seemed like one last ray of hope gleaming across the dead gloom of that night.—Several wretches were saved. And still, another, the Statesman came in sight.—More, more were saved.

A moment to me had only elapsed, when high in the heavens the cinders flew, and the country was alighted all around. Still another boat came booming on. I was happy that more help had come. After an exchange of words with the Columbus; he continued on his way under full steam. Oh, how my heart sunk within me! The waves created by this boat sent many a poor mortal to his long home. A being by the name of Dougherty was the Captain of that merciless boat. Long may he be remembered.

My hands were burnt, and I began to experience severe pain. The scene before me—the loss of my two sisters and brother, whom I had missed in the confusion, all had steeled my heart. I could not weep—I could not sigh. The cries of the babe at my side were nothing to me.

Again—another explosion! and the waters closed slowly and silently over the scene of disaster and death. Darkness resumed her sway, and the stillness was only interrupted by the distant efforts of the Columbus and Statesman in their laudible exertions to save human life.

Captain Castleman lost, I believe a father and a child. Some argue that this is punishment enough. No, it is not. He had the lives of hundreds under his charge. He was careless of his trust, he was guilty of a crime that nothing will ever wipe out. The blood of 200 victims is crying out from the depth of the father of waters for vengeance. Neither society nor law will forgive it. His punishment is yet to come—May I never meet him!

I could tell of scenes of horror that would rise the indignation of a stone; but I have done. As to myself, I could tell you much to incite your interest. It was more than three weeks after the occurrence before I ever shed a tear. All the fountains of sympathy had been dried up, and my heart was as the stone. As I lay on my bed the 24th day after, tears, salt tears came to my relief, and I felt the loss of my sisters and brother more deeply than ever. Peace be to their spirits, they found a watery grave.

In the course of all human events, scenes of misery will occur. But where they arise from sheer carelessness, it requires more than christian fortitude to forgive the being who is in fault. I repeat, may I never meet Captain Castleman or Captain Daugherty.

Seven thousand and ten passengers have arrived at the New York quarantine, from Europe, within the last ten days.

OFFICE OF THE DEMOCRAT,
NEXT DOOR TO ROBISON'S STAGE OFFICE.

TERMS:

The COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT will be published every Saturday morning, at TWO DOLLARS per annum, payable half yearly in advance, or Two Dollars Fifty Cents, if not paid within the year. No subscription will be taken for a shorter period than six months; nor any discontinuance permitted, until all arrearages are discharged. ADVERTISEMENTS not exceeding a square will be conspicuously inserted at One Dollar for the first three insertions, and Twenty-five cents for every subsequent insertion. A liberal discount made to those who advertise by the year. LETTERS addressed on business, must be post paid.

Literature, Science, & General News.

THE PHILADELPHIA SATURDAY CHRONICLE,
A FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

PROSPECTUS OF SECOND VOLUME.
Commencing May 20, 1837.

The SATURDAY CHRONICLE is a family newspaper, published on a sheet of the largest mammoth size, and issued regularly from Philadelphia every Saturday. It is entirely unconnected with party politics, and sectarianism, and is zealously devoted to the cause of Literature, Science and General Intelligence, as calculated to entertain and instruct every branch of the family circle. The design of the publishers is, to furnish a newspaper that shall instruct as well as amuse, and enlighten the middle-aged, as well as entertain, and direct to proper objects of study, the mind of youth. Their unprecedented success during the past year—(having obtained a very extensive circulation not only in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, but in every State of the Union)—induces them to believe that their plan of publication is a good one, and during the succeeding year, they will continue to pursue it zealously, with such improvements and modifications as may from time to time be suggested.

General Contents of the Chronicle.

Tales and Essays on Literary, Scientific and Moral subjects—Sketches of History and Biography—Reviews of new publications—Stories from the Classic writers—Popular Statistics of the World—Ladies' Department—Original Communications from some of the best writers of Philadelphia and elsewhere—Medical Lectures—Science and Art—Agriculture and Rural Economy—Popular Superstitions—Curious Customs—and Manners—European and Domestic Correspondence—Articles on Music, the Drama, and other amusements—Varieties, amusing incidents, &c. and a carefully prepared synopsis of the Current News of the Day, both Foreign and Domestic.

Attractions of the first Volume.

A regular correspondence from Europe, furnished by an able and eloquent writer, now on a tour through Europe, and engaged expressly for the Chronicle. Of this correspondence more than forty letters have been furnished.

A series of articles on Medical subjects, embracing lectures on Anatomy, in familiar language, from the pen of a distinguished Physician of Philadelphia.

The republication, in a supplementary sheet, of the choicest and best articles of the several London Annuals, for 1837, embracing articles from all the prominent English writers of the present day. The cost of these Annuals at retail is about \$50—their principal contents have been furnished the readers of the Chronicle gratis.

The republication of the inimitable Pickwick Papers, from the pen of the best comic writer of the age, Charles Dickens, Esq.

Original contributions on Literature, Science, Law, Education, Poetry, Political Economy, &c., from a number of the very best writers in America.

Extra Attractions for the second Volume.
The publication of the original articles, written for the Premiums of \$250, embracing a great number of compositions of merit. The original tale, to which will be awarded the prize of \$100, will probably be published in the first number of the second volume.

The European Correspondence will be regularly continued, as will also the Stories from the Classics, and indeed all the attractive features of the first volume. The notes and observations of a literary gentleman, now on a tour through the Western and Southern States, are also promised for publication in the Chronicle.

Choice literary selections will be furnished from the London Monthly, Bentley's Miscellany, Blackwood's, and other European Magazines, care being taken to select the very best articles, "winnowing the wheat from the chaff," from the great mass of English Literature, and not to allow their number to interfere with our usual variety.—Advantage will be taken of every circumstance calculated to add interest to the columns of the Chronicle. The publishers being determined to allow none to outstrip them in the "March of Improvement." During the past year the publishers have paid, for original contributions, premiums, correspondence, &c., more than

1000 Dollars,

And a still larger sum will be expended, for similar purposes, during the publication of the second volume.

TERMS OF THE CHRONICLE.

For a single copy for one year, \$2, in advance, six copies for \$10; or three copies for \$5. For six months, one dollar.

Small notes on all solvent Banks, received at par, in payment of subscriptions. Address (post paid.)

MATTHIAS & TAYLOR, Publishers, Philadelphia.

WANTED.

AN APPRENTICE to the Blacksmithing business. A Boy between 16 and 18 years of age, of good character and steady habits, will find a situation by applying to the subscriber, at his residence near Eppytown.

JOHN HAZLET, Jr.
July 8, 1837.

WANTED:

Corn, Ry, Oats & Potatoes,
FOR WHICH CASH will be paid on delivery.—Enquire at the Buckhorn.

W. T. WALTERS.
July 8, 1837.

NORTHUMBERLAND AND WILKESBARRE



LINE OF

MAIL STAGES

I observed a notice in the "Keystone," (one of which I published,) signed by Mr. P. C. Gilchrist, Agent, stating that the Susquehanna Line would carry passengers in less time than the Mail Stage—which is not the fact. It will be understood that the Boat leaves Harrisburg one day before the Stage; yet we have taken Passengers through to Wilkesbarre in time for the Mail Stages, notwithstanding the tardy manner in which the mail is brought from Harrisburg to us at Northumberland. If any other persons had the command of the mails from Harrisburg to Northumberland than those connected with the Boats, I would engage to start at the same hour with the Boat Harrisburg, and deliver the mail and the passengers TWELVE HOURS sooner than the Boat Line possibly can do it.

When the Company runs a stage from Northumberland to Wilkesbarre, the mail can arrive at Northumberland from Harrisburg by 11 o'clock A. M. but when the Boat runs above, they then take back the stage at Northumberland until 4 o'clock P. M. and sometimes as late as 7 o'clock P. M.

These are facts, which, if the Post Master General is not aware of, it is time he was made acquainted with them.

Any passengers wishing to take the stage Northumberland, to go through to Montrose, to be taken on in time to secure seats in the Mail Stage, notwithstanding the delay of the Boat in arriving at Northumberland—provided they upon a regular time for starting.

WILLIAM ROBISON

Bloomsburg, June 10, 1837.

SUSQUEHANNAH LINE OF



PACKET AND FREIGHT BOATS

From Philadelphia, by Rail Road & Canal to Harrisburg, Northumberland, Danville, Catiawissa, Bloomsburg, Berwick, Wilkesbarre, Milton, Williamsport, and intermediate places.

PASSENGERS can leave the West Branch Hotel, Broad street, Philadelphia, daily, at 6 o'clock A. M. reach Harrisburg at 4 o'clock P. of the same day; Northumberland at 10 o'clock M. of the next day; and Wilkesbarre on the evening of the next morning, and the Columbia in time to take the morning Mail Philadelphia.

The Boats also arrive at Williamsport, West Branch, at about 9 o'clock P. M. of the day on which they reach Northumberland—return daily.

RETURNING—The Boats leave Wilkesbarre daily, at 10 o'clock A. M., and arrive at Harrisburg at 4 o'clock P. M. It arrives at Harrisburg 5 o'clock on the following morning, and the Columbia in time to take the morning Mail Philadelphia.

The Boats also arrive at Williamsport, West Branch, at about 9 o'clock P. M. of the day on which they reach Northumberland—return daily.

The Boats on the above lines have been repaired and are now confidently recommended to the public as a pleasant, comfortable, and convenient mode of travelling. SEATS may be taken in Philadelphia at the north-east corner of Fourth & Chestnut streets, at No. 200 Market street, and at the West Branch Hotel, Broad street.

FREIGHT may be forwarded by Rail Road, Orick & Nobles and J. J. Lewis & Co. Broad street, and by Capt. McCabe's Line of Union Canal Boats to Harrisburg, where they will be received by Susquehanna Line from Jabez Harradine, Vine Street Wharf, Schuylkill.

P. Mc. C. GILCHRIST, Agent, Wilkesbarre, June 10, 1837.

NOTICE

To Travellers up the North Branch of Susquehanna.

PASSENGERS by the Susquehanna Boat from Northumberland, arrive at Wilkesbarre EIGHT HOURS sooner than by the Mail Stage, and reach Montrose TWENTY-FIVE HOURS sooner.

P. Mc. C. GILCHRIST, Agent, June 10, 1837.

CATTAWISSA HOUSE

THE SUBSCRIBER returns his acknowledgments to his friends for their liberal patronage, and would respectfully inform the public in general that he has fitted up his establishment, in Cattawissa, near the bridge, and

SIGN OF THE

CROSS

KEYS



is a very superior style, which will render convenient to all who may favor him with custom. His TABLE is supplied with the best of a bountiful market; his BAR well stored with the choicest Liquors; and his STABLE contains plenty of provender, and is attended by a full hostler. He solicits all to give him a call, and is confident that he will render satisfaction.

S. BROBST, Cattawissa, June 17, 1837.

ATTENTION!

THE Independent Troop will meet at the house of John McReynolds in Hamlock township on Saturday the 9th of September next, at 10 o'clock A. M. armed and equipped for drill. By order of the Captain.

T. W. DRAKE, O. S. Bloomsburg, Aug. 19, 1837.

STONE-COAL

OF a superior quality, just received and for sale by the subscriber. C. B. FISHER, Bloomsburg, Aug. 6, 1837.